



FACT SHEET **1**

Bullying: Something to Think About

“Teachers, are you a bully?” A school administrator, commenting on his district’s decision to include teacher behavior in its anti-bullying policy, complained that it would be difficult to distinguish between bullying behavior and classroom management strategies. What about you? Can you tell the difference between behavior management and a bullying?

Are you a bully? Two school districts in Connecticut think you could be. Avon and Hartford, Connecticut are believed to be the first districts in the nation to include teacher behavior in their anti-bullying policies. One Hartford administrator, however, expressed doubt about that inclusion, claiming it would be hard to distinguish between bullying behavior and classroom management strategies.

I beg to differ! Classroom management, according to education expert Harry Wong (See *Speaking of Classroom Management: An Interview with Harry K. Wong*), is the “practices and procedures that allow teachers to teach and students to learn.” Bullying, according to Dictionary.com is the practice of being “habitually cruel or overbearing, especially to smaller or weaker people.” In other words, those who can, manage their classrooms.

Those who can't, manage their students. The former are educators; the latter are bullies. And, believe me, you can tell the difference! Educators let students know they care. Bullies let students know who's boss. Educators teach self-control. Bullies exert their own control. Educators set ironclad expectations. Bullies rule with whims of steel. Educators diffuse minor disruptions with humor. Bullies use sarcasm to turn disruptions into confrontations. Educators privately counsel chronic discipline problems. Bullies publicly humiliate chronic misbehavers. Educators are judicious. Bullies are judgmental. Educators, aware of the power they wield over their students, choose their words and actions carefully. Bullies wield their power recklessly, frequently resorting to anger and intimidation. Educators help all students feel successful. Bullies punish students for being unsuccessful. Educators address misbehavior. Bullies attack the character of the misbehavers. Educators see each student's uniqueness. Bullies compare children to one another. Educators treat all students with respect. Bullies make it clear that not all students deserve respect. Educators highlight good behavior. Bullies make examples of poor behavior. Educators are proactive; they create classroom environments that minimize student misbehavior. Bullies are reactive; they blame students for the lack of order in their classrooms. Educators educate. Bullies humiliate. Educators exude confidence in their ability to maintain order in their classrooms. Bullies barely conceal their terror of losing control.

Are you a bully?

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